

On the Feeding Habits of *Thereva nobilitata* F. (Diptera: Therevidae)

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The feeding habits of the adults of the dipterous family Therevidae have been the subject of much speculation, but the family has generally been regarded as being predatory upon other insects. However, as Oldroyd (1969) pointed out, there are no records in the literature of Therevids preying on anything. Furthermore, as Oldroyd goes on to explain, the structure of the mouthparts of Therevidae do not seem to be adapted to a predatory habit; they are not modified into piercing organs as in the closely related family Asilidae nor are the labella supplied with the chitinous interlocking teeth found in species of the predatory family Dolichopodidae. Oldroyd concluded, therefore, that Therevids probably suck fluids for nourishment in the manner of Syrphid and Calyptrate flies, whose mouthparts most closely resemble those of the Therevidae. Another feature of the Therevidae that seems to indicate a non-predatory habit is the relative smallness of their eyes when compared with those of the predatory Asilidae.

It was with some interest, therefore, that I collected a female specimen of *Thereva nobilitata* F. from a rabbit corpse in Harrogate on 2nd July 1980. Of course, it cannot be said for certain that the fly was actually feeding on the carrion, but the fact that the corpse was placed under a trap is suggestive, because there seems to be no reason why the fly should have entered the trap if it were not attracted by the odour of the carrion. In my experience, only specifically carrion flies enter this trap, while other species do not, however abundant they may be in the vicinity. The only reference that I could find in the literature to a Therevid on carrion was the collection of an undetermined species of *Thereva* from a rabbit corpse at the Juniper Hall Field Centre, Dorking, in July 1951 (Chapman & Sankey, 1955).

Although the above observation offers no conclusive proof of carrion-feeding in Therevidae, it is perhaps worth recording in view of the paucity of information on the subject.

References

- Chapman, R. F., & Sankey, J. H. P. 1955. The larger invertebrate fauna of three rabbit carcasses. *J. anim. Ecol.* 24 (2): 395-402.
Oldroyd, H., 1969. Tabanoidea and Asiloidea. *Handbks Ident. Br. Insects* Vol. IX Part 4. Royal Entomological Society of London.

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PLUSIA GAMMA L. AND NOMOPHILA NOCTUELLA D. & S. IN S. DEVON. — *P. gamma* numbers in the m.v. trap from 7th June to 16th September were : June (20 nights), 35, July (23) 19, August (22) 158, September (11) 15. Total = 227. *N. noctuella* numbers were: June 23, July 12, August 76, September 6. Total = 117. — H. L. O'HEFFERNAN, Chillington, Kingsbridge, S. Devon.